

Byzantium in Dialogue with the Mediterranean

The Medieval Mediterranean

PEOPLES, ECONOMIES AND CULTURES, 400–1500

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Byzantium in Dialogue with the Mediterranean

History and Heritage

Edited by

Daniëlle Slootjes
Mariëtte Verhoeven



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Cover illustration: Abbasid Caliph al-Mamun sends an envoy to Byzantine Emperor Theophilos, *Skyllitzes Matritensis*, Unknown, 13th-century author, detail. With kind permission of the Biblioteca Nacional de España.

Image editing: Centre for Art Historical Documentation (CKD), Radboud University Nijmegen.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Slootjes, Daniëlle, editor. | Verhoeven, Mariëtte, editor.

Title: Byzantium in dialogue with the Mediterranean : history and heritage /
edited by Daniëlle Slootjes, Mariëtte Verhoeven.

Description: Leiden ; Boston : Brill, [2019] | Series: The medieval
Mediterranean : peoples, economies and cultures, 400-1500, ISSN 0928-5520;
volume 116 | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2018061267 (print) | LCCN 2019001368 (ebook) | ISBN
9789004393585 (ebook) | ISBN 9789004392595 (hardback : alk. paper)

Subjects: LCSH: Byzantine Empire--Relations--Europe, Western. | Europe,
Western--Relations--Byzantine Empire. | Byzantine
Empire--History--1081-1453. | Mediterranean Region--History--476-1517.

Classification: LCC DF547.E85 (ebook) | LCC DF547.E85 B98 2019 (print) | DDC
303.48/2495018220902--dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2018061267>

Typeface for the Latin, Greek, and Cyrillic scripts: "Brill". See and download: brill.com/brill-typeface.

ISSN 0928-5520

ISBN 978-90-04-39259-5 (hardback)

ISBN 978-90-04-39358-5 (e-book)

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Notes on Contributors

Hans Bloemsma

Ph.D. (2006), is associate professor of art history at University College Roosevelt, Middelburg. His publications include: “Byzantine Art and Early Italian Painting” (2013) and “Challenging the Vasarian Paradigm: Carl Friedrich von Rumohr and Early Italian Painting” (2016).

Elena Boeck

Ph.D. (2003), Yale, is professor of history of art and architecture at DePaul University. Her publications, including *Imagining the Byzantine Past* (2015), explore intellectual exchange in the Mediterranean and unconventional, fascinating forms of engagement with Byzantium's legacy.

Averil Cameron

was professor of late antique and Byzantine history at Oxford and Warden of Keble College, and has published numerous books and articles on late antiquity and Byzantium, including *Byzantine Matters* (2014) and *Arguing it Out* (2016).

Elsa Fernandes Cardoso

M.A. (2015), University of Lisbon, is Ph.D. grantee and teaching assistant at the Centre for History of that same university. Her research focuses on al-Andalus and its relations with other Mediterranean powers, such as the Byzantine Empire.

Cristian Caselli

Ph.D. (2010), University of Pisa, is lecturer in history of Italy and Spain at the University of Göttingen. He has published studies on the relations between Renaissance Italy and the Ottoman empire, including a critical edition of Nicholas Sagundinus' account on the fall of Constantinople (2012).

Evangelos Chrysos

Ph.D. (1963), Bonn, is emeritus professor of Byzantine history at the University of Athens. His research focuses on the international and diplomatic history of Byzantium, the political and ecclesiastical administration and the procedures of Church councils.

Konstantinos Chrysosgelos

Ph.D. (2016), University of Thessaloniki, is professor at the Hellenic Open University. He has published monographs and articles on Byzantine literature and the reception of Byzantium in modern Greece, including a critical edition of Constantine Manasses' *Hodoiporikon*.

Penelope Mougoyianni

is a Ph.D. candidate in Byzantine archaeology and art at the University of Athens. She is currently preparing her Ph.D. thesis: *Byzantine Southern Italy (876–1071). Art, Cult and Ideology on the Western Frontier*.

Daphne Penna

Ph.D. (2012), University of Groningen, is assistant professor in legal history at the University of Groningen. She has published a comparative legal study on Byzantium and the Italians (2012) and is currently working on Byzantine legal commentaries of the 11th and 12th century and on Byzantine maritime law.

Marko Petrak

Ph.D. (2003), is postdoctoral fellow at the *Centro di studi e ricerche sui Diritti Antichi* (Pavia), and full professor of Roman law at the University of Zagreb. He has published extensively on Roman Law and its traditions, including *Nobile hoc Romani Imperii monumentum: Laudes imperiales in Byzantine Dalmatia* (2016).

Matthew Savage

Ph.D. (2008), University of Vienna, is assistant professor of art history and Director of the Hans Buchwald Library and Archive at Louisiana State University. His research and publications focus primarily on Middle Byzantine art and architecture.

Daniëlle Slootjes

Ph.D. (2004), Chapel Hill, is associate professor of Ancient History at the Institute of Historical, Literary and Cultural Studies, Radboud University Nijmegen. She has published extensively on late antique Roman administration, geography, the history of early Christianity and crowd behavior in the period of Late Antiquity and the Byzantine Empire.

Karen Stock

Ph.D. (2005), the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, is professor of art history at Winthrop University. Her publications include essays on Edgar

Degas and Emile Zola, Florine Stettheimer's solo exhibition as well as Félix Vallotton and the modern French interior.

Alex Rodriguez Suarez

Ph.D. (2014), King's College London, is an independent scholar. He has co-edited the monograph on the Byzantine Emperor John II Komnenos (2016). His current research focuses on bell ringing in Byzantium and the Balkans.

Mariëtte Verhoeven

Ph.D. (2010), Radboud University Nijmegen, is postdoctoral researcher at the Institute of Historical, Literary and Cultural Studies at Radboud University Nijmegen. Her research focuses on the cultural history of early Christian and Byzantine architecture. She has published on Ravenna, Jerusalem and Istanbul.

Byzantium in Dialogue

Daniëlle Slootjes and Mariëtte Verhoeven

In June of 2016 a group of both junior and senior scholars from various disciplines such as history, art history, literature and archaeology came together at the Radboud University Nijmegen for the conference “Byzantine Studies Alive!” to unlock the importance of the Byzantine world for our current generations. The editors of this volume, who were also the organizers of the conference, had carefully chosen the title of the conference as an optimistic signal, both to the scholarly world as well as a more general audience, that Byzantine Studies is a vibrant and dynamic field of study that needs continued attention. In recent decades, Byzantine Studies in the Netherlands has come under pressure due to budget cuts that universities worldwide are experiencing in many fields. Especially since Byzantine Studies is an international flourishing field, we wanted to take the opportunity to show how “alive” our field is in organizing a meeting in the Netherlands. Nijmegen seemed to be an excellent location for such a gathering, from a scholarly perspective as the Radboud University has expertise in Byzantine History and Art History as well as the Institute of Eastern Christian Studies, and from a historic point of view. Nijmegen embodies historic Byzantine grounds: the Empress Theophanu, who as a princess had been sent from Byzantium to the West in 972 to marry the Holy Roman Emperor Otto II, died there on June 15 of the year 990. In commemoration of this event, in 1991 the castle Hernen (close to Nijmegen and home to the Byzantine *A.A. Bredius Foundation*) offered the stage to a group of distinguished scholars who met to consider various issues and aspects of Theophanu’s background in Byzantium, her life in the West, and her impact on her contemporary society. This meeting led to the volume *The Empress Theophanu* (Cambridge 1995, edited by the Nijmegen Professor Adelbert Davids of the Institute of Eastern Christian Studies).

Furthermore, the “Byzantine Studies Alive!” conference fits a longstanding Dutch tradition of research in Byzantine literature, law, history and archaeology that was once blossoming at most universities in the Netherlands. While it would go too far in this introduction to mention all Dutch Byzantine scholars of the past centuries and their work, it is noteworthy to mention one specific theme that seems to have been recurring in many Dutch scholarly works and which was also part of our 2016 conference, namely interactions and exchange between East and West. Earlier publications, such as *Byzantium in Westerse Ogen, 1096–1204* by B. Ebels-Hoving (Assen, 1971), K. Ciggaar’s

Western Travellers to Constantinople (Leiden, 1996), the volume of *East and West in the Medieval Eastern Mediterranean* (edited by K. Ciggaar and V. van Aalst), or *East and West in the Roman Empire of the Fourth Century: an End to Unity?* (Leiden, 2015, edited by R. Dijkstra, S. van Poppel and D. Slootjes) are illustrative for this particular focus.

Our “Byzantine Studies Alive!” conference is part of a current wave of new and successful attempts at the various universities in the Netherlands to continue and revive Byzantine studies, both in scholarship as well as in parts of the teaching programs. The Byzantine Studies Netherlands association (<https://www.ru.nl/byzantinestudies/>) that is part of the “Association Internationale des Etudes Byzantines” (AIEB) organizes lively annual meetings which attract a new generation of Dutch Byzantine scholars.

The fruitful scholarly meeting in June of 2016 as well as the extensive coverage of the meeting and the scholarly field of Byzantine Studies in Dutch media (national radio and newspapers) have encouraged the organizers and participants as well as some additional scholars to put together a collection of contributions based on the themes and discussions at the conference.

The title of the volume, *Byzantium in Dialogue with the Mediterranean. History and Heritage*, underlines two notions that we regard as fundamental both for the dynamic continuation of Byzantine Studies as a scholarly field as well as for the way in which the material and immaterial heritage from the Byzantine world in general is to be regarded an inextricable part of the history of the European continent and the Middle East. In regard to “Dialogue,” our contributions show that throughout the centuries of its existence, Byzantium continuously communicated and exchanged with other cultures and societies on the European continent as well as North Africa and in the East. Furthermore, Byzantium continued to exist beyond its own political and physical existence as an empire by way of legal, artistic and architectural influences in later periods. Also, connections between Byzantium and the other peoples and states around the Mediterranean position our volume within a larger scholarly discussion that steps away from micro histories of lands and states, but instead calls for broader visions on the Mediterranean as an extended geographical area that is characterized by connectivity. In recent decades, especially *The Corrupting Sea* by P. Horden and N. Purcell (Oxford, 2000) and D. Abulafia's *The Great Sea. A Human History of the Mediterranean* (Oxford, 2011) have been pivotal in calling our attention to this approach.

In this volume, “History” represents not only the chronological, geographical and narrative background of the historical reality of Byzantium (what happened, when and where?), but it also stands for an all-inclusive scholarly

approach to the Byzantine world that transcends the boundaries of traditionally separate disciplines such as history, art history or archaeology. The second notion, "Heritage," refers to both material remains and immaterial traditions, and traces that have survived or have been appropriated. Byzantine heritage can be detected within the chronological period of the Byzantine Empire and beyond, as well as within the original geographical territory of the Empire and beyond.

The common thread throughout the entire volume is the relationship and mutual exchange of ideas and objects between Byzantium and its neighbours or successors, both geographically and chronologically. No empire, nation or people lives in isolation. Several notions that bring out this relationship and exchange play an important role in various contributions. For instance, Byzantium can be seen as a leading catalyst in the political, cultural, economic and religious exchange between East and West, to be detected in the relationship both between Byzantium and Latin Western Europe and Byzantium and the Islamic world. The exchange between East and West can be expressed by agents of transfer such as rulers, bishops, popes, diplomats, legal experts, pilgrims, writers or artists, and by objects of transcultural encounters and transfer such as (religious) monuments, texts (hagiography, historiography, liturgical texts, travel accounts), decorations, liturgical objects, relics or diplomatic gifts. These agents and objects can be regarded as part of the larger historical context within which Europe took shape in the Middle Ages and beyond.

Furthermore, the exchange is also expressed by way of a visual perspective on the history and heritage of the Byzantine world. The dimension and visual identity of the Byzantine Empire was not one identical continuum. In different phases of development (Arab conquests, iconoclasm, Crusader period), Byzantine monuments and artefacts were appropriated or under threat, a phenomenon that continued after the Ottoman conquest. The contributions of this volume show these notions and perspectives in medieval as well as modern times.

The volume opens with an introductory contribution by Averil Cameron who also gave the keynote lecture at the conference in Nijmegen. On the one hand, Cameron draws attention to some general issues that pertain to the study of Byzantium such as the discussion about its belonging to Europe, the role of orthodoxy, popular appeal of Byzantium and issues of its national and religious inheritance. Furthermore, recent discussions on the value of empire and global history can be applied to the functioning of the Byzantine Empire as well. On the other hand, Cameron offers a glimpse of her personal experiences while entering the field of Byzantine Studies.

Evangelos Chrysos focuses on the relations between ecclesiastical authorities in the East and West in his analysis of the decision by Pope Nicholas I (858–867) to deny recognition of the Patriarch Photius's ordination to the patriarchal throne. This particular situation, also known as the "Photian Schism," is illustrative for the application of Canon Law in the East and West as well as for possible papal aspiration of exercising jurisdiction of the Church in the East.

The contribution by Marko Petrak examines mediaeval Dalmatian Exultets, which were prayers sung for the Byzantine emperors that were part of the Western liturgical tradition. Petrak aims to show that the ritual structures of Dalmatian Exultets can also serve as a historical source for the reconstruction of certain crucial aspects of the mediaeval institutions of Dalmatia as a peripheral part of the Byzantine Empire.

Matthew Savage deals with the urban topography of Constantinople in the 9th and 10th centuries and aims to show how building projects in the city during this period actively sought both to emphasize the existing physical landscape of the earthly city and to alter it in ways to make it correspond with the Byzantine conception of the Heavenly City in the afterlife.

Elsa Fernandes Cardoso investigates the contacts between the Umayyads of al-Andalus and Byzantium in the 10th century. She argues that we should move beyond traditional explanations that style these contacts in terms of rivalry, and instead should look for political motivations and mercantile interests as motivators for their contacts.

Another type of East and West exchange, that between Byzantines and Normans, is found in the appearance of St Nicholas of Myra and St Nicholas the Pilgrim in Southern Italy in the 11th century. In her analysis of these two saints and the churches that were built for them, Penelope Mougoyianni demonstrates that Byzantium continued to play a pivotal role during this transitional period. It becomes clear that the two cities chose their saints to promote different agendas, either to confront Byzantium, as Bari seems to have done, or to make a statement of self-identity through the attachment to Byzantine culture, as in the case of Trani.

Elena Boeck points the reader to the French romance *Le Pèlerinage de Charlemagne à Jérusalem et à Constantinople*, a text commonly overlooked by Byzantinists, but fascinating in that it can be used as evidence of geopolitical competition, as a discourse on contemporary debates about imperial primacy and as a violent fantasy which prefigures the conquest of Constantinople by the Crusaders in 1204.

Daphne Penna takes the reader on a legal journey in her analysis and comparison of both Byzantine legal acts and Crusader charters towards Venice,

Pisa and Genoa. Penna demonstrates that the case of the Italians in the 12th century is illustrative for insights into the functioning of legal interaction between Byzantium and the Crusader states and is valuable for our explorations of the role of law in unifying the eastern Mediterranean.

Alex Rodriguez Suarez zooms in on the Byzantine court and its appreciation for the Latin West by way of a close examination of the Sebastokrator Isaac Komnenos, the uncle of the Emperor Manuel I (1143–80) and an important member of the Komnenian family.

Hans Bloemsma offers a re-examination of the meaning of so-called retrospective modes in 14th-century Italian painting by applying the terms “nearness” and “distance” in relation to the different stylistic modes that characterize painting of this time-period.

Cristian Caselli concentrates on Nicholas Sagundinus, a native from the Venetian colony of Negroponte, who as a diplomat in the service of Venice can serve as a notable example of contacts between the Levant and Latin Europe and the integration of Greek émigrés in Renaissance Italy.

Karen Stock, in her analysis of Maurice Denis’s (1870–1943) vision of reconciliation between the Byzantine and the modern, pieces together Denis’s conception of Byzantium from numerous writings while also placing Denis’s ideas within the context of the French Byzantine revival that occurred at the turn of the century.

Finally, Konstantinos Chrysosgelos leads our volume into the late 20th century in discussion of the use of Byzantine heritage in Greek cinema, with a particular focus on the 1987 movie *Doxobus*.

Byzantinists and Others

Averil Cameron

It is widely agreed that Byzantium has a contested place in general historical debate. Unlike Rome, or classical Greece, its very identity is uncertain; it is virtually ignored in the scholarship of many European countries, while being claimed in national and religious narratives by others. Whether Byzantium belongs to Europe is also contested, and it was not at first included in the successful European Science Foundation “Transformation of the Roman World” project in the 1990s, which covered the period AD 400–900 and was explicitly designed to promote knowledge transfer between the central and the more peripheral countries of the European Union. It has also been assigned to an “Orthodox sphere,” or to “Orthodox civilisation,” and is routinely omitted in histories of Western Europe, and in the many linear narratives that trace a line from the classical world to the Enlightenment and modernity.¹

In a book published in 2011, the historian Norman Davies, author of a previous history of Europe (1996), included Byzantium (which for some reason he calls “Byzantion”) as one of the “vanished kingdoms” of Europe.² He gives it only a short treatment and one that certainly would not satisfy any Byzantinist, with long quotations from Edward Gibbon, and having as its conclusion W.B. Yeats’s melancholy poem, *Byzantium*, of 1930 (described recently as “long and notoriously obscure”).³ Davies’s chapter is also surprising in other ways; among the fourteen other so-called “vanished kingdoms” in his book are Litva, Borussia, Galicia, and Rosenau, unlikely companions for Byzantium. But it is interesting nevertheless that for Davies Byzantium definitely belongs to Europe. He does not even raise the issue as a question, and there is not a word

1 See for instance Larry Siedentop, *Inventing the individual. The Origins of Western Liberalism* (London, 2014).

2 Norman Davies, *Vanished Kingdoms. The History of Half-Forgotten Europe* (London, 2011); cf. id., *Europe: a History* (Oxford, 1996). Byzantium and Europe: Averil Cameron, “Byzantium between East and West,” in *Présence de Byzance. Textes réunis par Jean-Michel Spieser*, Jean-Michel Spieser, ed. (Lausanne, 2007), pp. 113–33.

3 So Thomas Sjösvärd, “Perme in a Gyre: the Poetic Representation of an Ideal State in the Byzantine Poems of W.B. Yeats,” in *Wanted, Byzantium. The Desire for a Lost Empire*, Ingela Nilsson and Paul Stephenson, eds., *Studia Byzantina Upsaliensia* 15 (Uppsala, 2014), pp. 237–45, at p. 238, with references to the copious bibliography on Yeats and Byzantium, especially the much-cited *Sailing to Byzantium* (1926).

about the “eastern Mediterranean,” Byzantium as a Mediterranean power or about the Islamic world, all of them central in other recent works. Byzantium is also by far the longest-lasting among his “vanished kingdoms,” having lasted on the usual chronology from 330 to 1453, but this too is a feature that Davies does not discuss.

I have written before about the “absence” of Byzantium – the fact that it is so regularly left out of wider histories.⁴ It was not for nothing that in 2014 Ingela Nilsson and Paul Stephenson called their edited volume *Wanted, Byzantium. The Desire for a Lost Empire*. But it is not only absence that is the problem, but also the strange attraction that many feel towards Byzantium – perhaps indeed a fatal attraction, because it is an attraction so often experienced for all the wrong reasons. Gold, glitter, exoticism, all these make Byzantium fascinating but also stand in the way of serious historical discussion.⁵ Gold has a central place in Yeats’s Byzantium poems too, and their evocation of an imagined Byzantium. When I published my book *Byzantine Matters* in 2014 my only specification for the cover design was “no gold, no purple, and no Empress Theodora.”⁶

There is no doubt that Byzantium has a popular appeal. Think of the many novels about Theodora, for example, with new ones still appearing. There is a dedicated band of Byzantium-followers on Twitter, among which I suspect that academics represent a small minority. Television series enhance the appeal of Byzantium, and books of popular history are widely read, as are the increasing numbers of historical novels with Byzantine settings. But at the same time Byzantium has evoked considerable hostility. J.R.R. Tolkien, author of *The Lord of the Rings*, regarded Constantinople as “a heartless town,” standing for “corrupt worldly politics and crushing of alternatives or different views.”⁷ The same idea of Byzantium as autocratic, or even totalitarian, was held by the Jewish Byzantinist Alexander Kazhdan, who eventually succeeded in leaving the Soviet Union for the West and found a home at Dumbarton Oaks in Washington, DC. Reacting against the Soviet system with whose pressures he

4 Averil Cameron, “The Absence of Byzantium,” *Nea Hestia* (Jan, 2008), 4–59 (in English and Greek), with comments by other scholars in subsequent issues.

5 Averil Cameron, *The Use and Abuse of Byzantium*, Inaugural Lecture, King’s College London, 1990 (London, 1992), reprinted in *Changing Cultures in Early Byzantium* (Aldershot, 1996), no. XIII; “Seeing Byzantium: a Personal Response,” in *Wonderful Things: Byzantium through its Art*, Liz James and Antony Eastmond, eds. (Farnham, 2013), pp. 311–18; see also M.-F. Auzépy, ed., *Byzance et l’Europe, XVIe–XX siècle* (Paris, 2003).

6 Averil Cameron, *Byzantine Matters* (Princeton, NJ, 2014).

7 Gondor represents Byzantium and the Elves and the True West the Goths and Lombards, and thus the opposition to it: Miryam Librán-Moreno, “Byzantium, New Rome’. Goths, Longobards and Byzantium in *The Lord of the Rings*,” in *Tolkien and the Study of his Sources. Critical Essays*, Jason Fisher, ed. (McFarland, 2011), pp. 84–115, at pp. 110–11.

was only too familiar, he saw in Byzantium a model of an autocratic regime in which there was no freedom for the individual.⁸ Ihor Ševčenko's typically intriguing paper of 1994, "Was there totalitarianism in Byzantium?," argued that Byzantium could not truly be called totalitarian since "given the imperfections of the time" it lacked the means of thoroughgoing enforcement. His starting point was the answer he gave to a question posed by G.I. Yanaev, the then vice-president of the USSR, during the momentous international Byzantine congress of 1991, which coincided with the Moscow putsch; in answer to Yanaev's question, "was there totalitarianism in Byzantium?" Ševčenko said that "like all centralized states with a single ideology, Byzantium tended towards totalitarianism."⁹

The question of national and religious inheritance is particularly fraught. The 19th-century divisions over the place of Byzantium in the history of modern Greece are well known and have not gone away; the inheritance of Byzantium has again become a political and nationalist issue in Russia,¹⁰ and in Turkey, where younger scholars are now keen to study Byzantium and Byzantine archaeology and the history of Constantinople, and where opportunities exist which were not been there in the past. At the same time, they are exposed to a state-supported nationalist, religious and political campaign that promotes the glories of the Ottoman past. With the end of communist rule in Eastern Europe the legacy of Byzantium has become a critical matter in the national

8 See Alexander Kazhdan and Giles Constable, *People and Power in Byzantium. An Introduction to Modern Byzantine Studies* (Washington, DC, 1982). According to Kazhdan "Byzantine man" was atomized in the face of the power of the state, and could aspire only to "individualism without freedom"; it is interesting to observe that lines from Yeats's "Sailing to Byzantium" were chosen as the epigraph. See also the paper by the Russian medievalist Aaron Gurevich, "Why I am Not a Byzantinist," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 46 (1992), 89–96, especially 93: "The closer I studied Byzantine history, the more I came to suspect that I was studying something already familiar to me: that in another place and at another time, with different names and in a different language, this was the same history that had been endured and was still being endured in my own country," and 95: "can one imagine a Magna Carta in Byzantium or in Rus? Is it conceivable that a Byzantine emperor or a Russian tsar could view himself, or might be viewed by others, as *primus inter pares*?" From 1970 onwards Gurevich had been barred from academic teaching after criticizing Marxist orthodoxy on the development of feudalism, and for showing the influence of structuralism, but was reinstated and allowed to travel after 1989.

9 I. Ševčenko, "Was there Totalitarianism in Byzantium? Constantinople's Control over its Asiatic Hinterland in the Early Ninth Century," in *Constantinople and its Hinterland*, Cyril Mango and Gilbert Dagron, eds. (Aldershot, 1994), pp. 91–105. Ševčenko's conclusion (p. 105) compared "embryonic" [i.e. Byzantine] and "decomposing" [i.e. Soviet] totalitarianism.

10 Averil Cameron, *Byzantine Matters*, p. 2.

consciousness of several countries, and politics and religion can again be seen to be acting together. The common perception of Byzantium and Orthodoxy as somehow co-extensive¹¹ is fundamental to these developments. Finally, studying Byzantium is hard: it needs language skills most people now lack and are not well placed to acquire. Certainly in my own national experience, if Greek was ever taught in state schools in the UK, it has all but disappeared now. Translations are crucial if Byzantine literature is going to be available at all for most people. Thankfully more and more are now appearing, as Byzantinists take on the challenge of making their subject more accessible.

National differences in scholarship matter a great deal, even in our world of conferences and collaborations, and they are especially critical in the present case. But younger scholars today, including specialists on Byzantium, are far more mobile, and more international in their working methods, than they used to be. It was very different for me. For someone like me, when I was young, and a product of the British educational system, Byzantium was hardly visible. British Byzantine studies in previous generations were dominated by a handful of unusual historians – not simply Edward Gibbon (that is indeed another story), but rather, in the 20th century J.B. Bury, Steven Runciman, Norman Baynes and Joan Hussey, all of whom managed to carve out a Byzantine space for themselves, often without holding specifically Byzantine posts. Bury also wrote on classical Greece and held chairs of Greek and modern history in Dublin and Cambridge; he also taught at the school in Dublin where Yeats was a pupil. Runciman spent most of his life outside the university system as what used to be called a “private scholar.” Robert Browning, who encouraged me to work on Agathias in the early 1960s, was a professor of classics and never held a Byzantine position. It is also well known that several of those who held the two named chairs in Byzantine and Modern Greek established at King’s College London and Oxford in the early 20th century used their inaugural lectures to denigrate Byzantium and Byzantine culture by making unfavourable comparisons between Byzantium and classical antiquity. They included Romilly Jenkins, who held the Koraes chair at King’s, while also lecturing on classical Greek archaeology, and his successor, Cyril Mango, who gave two inaugural lectures, first at King’s in the Koraes chair and then at Oxford as Bywater and Sotheby Professor, both critical of Byzantium and the Byzantine heritage (and in the latter case of Byzantine literature), and finally Donald Nicol, also

11 Averil Cameron, *Byzantine Christianity* (London, 2017) argues against the conflation. See also Averil Cameron, “Byzantium and the Limits of Orthodoxy,” *Proceedings of the British Academy* 154 (2008), 139–52 and *Byzantine Matters*, chap. 5.

a Koraes Professor at King's and also originally a classicist.¹² These lectures and their later publication held a canonical status, even though they have also given rise to critical reactions, and demonstrate the problems that have been faced by other Byzantinists, especially younger ones, who were trying to escape from this negativity. I used my own inaugural lecture at King's College London in 1989 to draw attention to these conflicting attitudes and to the tension that seemed to surround the whole subject.¹³

Byzantinists in Britain and elsewhere in Europe are also suffering from national policies towards education that prioritize science, technology and medicine over the humanities. Universities accordingly make what seem rational economic choices and squeeze out small humanities subjects. Yet at the same time the subject has an undoubted resilience. To take examples only from the English-speaking world I know best, the University of Edinburgh has been able to establish a new chair in Byzantine studies in 2016, and to advertise a new position in Byzantine history, and I can vouch for the large numbers of post-graduate students studying late antiquity and Byzantium at Oxford. In Australia a determined group of Byzantinists has kept the subject alive, and in North America, where there are also rather few actual positions in Byzantine studies, the annual Byzantine Studies Conference attracts more and more participants each year. Dumbarton Oaks in Washington DC has few problems in attracting excellent applicants for its fellowships from round the world. Meanwhile strikingly large crowds are attracted to major Byzantine exhibitions in Europe and North America, even if those who attend are sometimes puzzled by what they see.

But Yeats was not alone in being attracted to the gold, glitter and mystery of Byzantium. Others, like the British writer and traveller Robert Byron in the 1920s, have admired Byzantium for the very reason that it seemed so unlike classical antiquity; its aesthetic appeal led Byron and the young David Talbot Rice to argue that Byzantine art was superior to classical. Byron's 1929 book, *The Byzantine Achievement*, published when he was still in his early twenties, followed *The Station*, published in the previous year, in which he described his experience of a journey to Mount Athos. In 1930 he and his friend Talbot Rice, who had travelled with him, published *The Birth of Western Painting*, claiming

12 See Anthony A.M. Bryer, "Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies: a Partial View," *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 12 (1988), 1–26.

13 Cameron, "Use and Abuse"; see also "Thinking with Byzantium," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 21 (2011), 39–57; "Bury, Baynes and Toynbee," in *Through the Looking Glass. Byzantium through British Eyes*, Robin Cormack and Elizabeth Jeffreys, eds. (Aldershot, 2000), pp. 163–76, and with Roderick Beaton, "Koraes, Toynbee and the Modern Greek Heritage," *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 15 (1991), 1–18.

that later Byzantine art led directly to the art of Western Europe: thus the origins of European art lay in Byzantium. Patrick Leigh Fermor, another writer whose travel books are very widely read in England, was a great admirer of Robert Byron, and consciously imitated him (though Byron was not equally admired by Steven Runciman). It was also the Byzantine aesthetic and the move away from the classical, that drew members of the Arts and Crafts movement in England to the British School at Athens in its early days, and that influenced key figures of the period like Edwin Freshfield and O.M. Dalton of the British Museum.¹⁴ As Annabel Wharton has shown, the design of the Roman Catholic Westminster Cathedral in London, built in 1903, consciously followed the Byzantine tradition, and included extensive mosaic decoration.¹⁵

1 A Personal Trajectory

I want to turn now to my own development. I was a classicist at Oxford, with a very thorough training in Greek and Latin, classical literature, ancient history and also ancient and some modern philosophy. I am therefore one of those Byzantinists who may be in danger of importing classical norms and classical assumptions.

In my first academic post at King's College London in 1965 I was required to teach classical texts, but from 1970 I succeeded Howard Scullard as Reader in ancient history, at the time the only post in ancient history in the department. There were as yet no archaeologists, and ancient history was regarded as strictly ancillary to classical language and literature. A year spent in New York in 1967–68 teaching in the graduate school at Columbia opened my eyes to many issues and made me many friends. At King's College there was a tiny department of Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, headed in my day first by Cyril Mango and then by Donald Nicol, but I was in the Classics department. From 1970 I belonged to both Classics and History, and I was not yet recognized as a Byzantinist, despite the fact that I had completed a PhD on Agathias in 1966, and at the same time laid the foundation for my later book on Procopius. It was also unusual to move from a classics degree at Oxford (then known as *Literae Humaniores*, or "Greats," but now simply as Classics) to the 6th century A.D.,

14 Amalia G. Kakissis, "The Byzantine Research Fund Archive: Encounters of Arts and Crafts Architects in Byzantium," in *Scholars, Travels, Archives*, Llewellyn Smith et al., eds., pp. 125–44; Christopher Entwistle, "O.M. Dalton: 'Ploughing the Byzantine furrow,'" in *Through the Looking Glass*, pp. 177–83.

15 Annabel Wharton, "Westminster Cathedral: Medieval Architecture and Religious Difference" *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 26.3 (1996), 523–55.

but I left Oxford straight after graduating and did not return for many years until I became the head of an Oxford college in 1994.

I strongly believe in the relevance of one's own subjectivity as a scholar, and I think my trajectory shows just how important early mentors can be, often in ways not realized at the time. Arnaldo Momigliano became my supervisor in London at University College, and I attended his weekly seminars at the Warburg Institute regularly for many years thereafter. Peter Brown was also my doctoral examiner in 1966, and was later to lead me into late antiquity, but in the 1960s I was already teaching in London and was not part of his circle in Oxford. Momigliano was a stronger influence though not a Byzantinist (I do not remember him ever showing much interest in Byzantium). The foundations of my work on Agathias had already been laid at the University of Glasgow, and Momigliano was a very hands-off supervisor; his influence on me lay rather in the example he provided in focusing on a range of historical problems to which he would return over and over again.¹⁶ Reading the ten volumes of his collected papers is like having a conversation with someone who is always puzzling over some issue that he wants to understand.¹⁷ I absorbed this from him by a kind of osmosis, and it made me more interested in historical problems and arguments than in collecting information for its own sake. It also gave me a taste for intellectual and philosophical issues about the nature of history that formed my approach thereafter until the present day.

Momigliano was forced to give up the chair at Turin in 1938, which he had only recently occupied after a tense election, as a result of the race laws in Fascist Italy, and came to England in 1939 as a Jewish refugee scholar. Like a number of others, he and his wife and daughter spent the war years in Oxford, which he did not find easy. The prevailing positivism in Oxford ancient history was very different from what he knew in Italy and especially from the idealism he had absorbed from Benedetto Croce and others. Ancient history was taught in Oxford both then and in my own time from a close reading of the central Greek and Latin historians and with a focus on narrow historical periods and a narrow range of topics. As an undergraduate I read the whole of Herodotus and Thucydides, not to mention the whole of Homer and the whole of Virgil, all in the original Greek and Latin, but never studied anything later than the reign of the Emperor Nero and was rarely if ever introduced to major historical

16 On Momigliano see especially Peter Brown, "Arnaldo Dante Momigliano, 1908–1987," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 74 (1988), 405–42 and Tim Cornell and Oswyn Murray, eds., *The Legacy of Arnaldo Momigliano* (London, 2014).

17 Momigliano's collected essays have been published between 1955 and 2012 in ten volumes of *Contributi alla storia degli studi classici e del mondo antico* (Rome, 1955–2012).

themes.¹⁸ Peter Brown, in contrast, belonged to the History Faculty (known until recently as Modern History, although it began officially in AD 284).

We were also required to study ancient philosophy, which meant wrestling directly with large amounts of Plato and Aristotle, also in Greek, and that has certainly stayed with me. It is interesting that someone Momigliano did find congenial in Oxford was R.G. Collingwood, an interesting figure who combined holding a chair in philosophy with being a practising Roman archaeologist, and with a serious interest in historiography. His book *The Idea of History* was published in 1946, after his death, and made a stir at the time. Unusually, Collingwood was influenced by Italian idealism, and argued that history was not a science or about proof, and that it needed historical imagination.

Momigliano believed profoundly that history was about truth. He and I disagreed in the 1980s, when I had been discovering literary theory after another important year in America in 1977–78, this time at Princeton. Its influence shows in the arrangement and approach of my book on Procopius, published in 1985, and much more in an edited volume on *History as Text*, published in 1989.¹⁹ Momigliano on the other hand felt that the new emphasis on discourse rather than (as he would say), truth, was a serious threat, and strongly opposed the positions taken by Hayden White and many others after him, who have argued that history is a matter of rhetoric or discourse rather than of objective truth.²⁰ He disapproved of my decision to reverse the normal procedure of privileging Procopius's *Wars*, and to start instead with the so-called “minor” works, the *Secret History* and the *Buildings*.²¹ Soon after the publication of my book on Procopius I gave the Sather Lectures at Berkeley in California, published as *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire* in 1991. I am still not sure what led to my choosing that topic, which entailed an investigation of New Testament scholarship. However, the lectures reflected my interest in discourse and argued that the large volume of Christian writing in the centuries up to Justinian was an important factor in Christianization and that whatever their claims,

18 Such a training in analyzing texts in detail is indeed of crucial importance for those Byzantinists fortunate enough to have access to it, and Fergus Millar has also pointed to the advantages of an “old-fashioned” classical training in dealing with late antiquity: Fergus Millar, *Empire, Church and Society in the Late Roman Near East. Greeks, Jews, Syrians and Saracens* (Collected Studies, 2004–14) (Leuven, 2016), p. 801.

19 *Procopius and the Sixth Century* (London, 1985); ed. *History as Text* (London, 1989).

20 Momigliano argued against Hayden White in a notable article of 1981, “The Rhetoric of History and the History of Rhetoric: On Hayden White’s Tropes,” in *Comparative Criticism. A Yearbook*, vol. 3, Elinor S. Shaffer, ed. (Cambridge, 1981), pp. 259–68.

21 For reflections on recent scholarship on Procopius see Averil Cameron, “Writing about Procopius Then and Now,” in *Procopius of Caesarea: Literary and Historical Interpretations*, Christopher Lillington-Martin, ed. with Elodie Turquois (Milton Park, 2017), pp. 13–25.

Christian authors followed similar rhetorical and discursive techniques to those used in contemporary non-Christian writing. The argument now seems commonplace, but it was far from obvious at the time, and it was certainly a notable departure for me; it also marked a further step in the direction of Hayden White rather than Momigliano. It coincided with a seminar I held on a crucially important work, Eusebius's *Life of Constantine*, which eventually led to a joint publication with a colleague in the Theology Faculty at King's College London,²² and is not the only one among my publications to have started in this way. Another was the joint translation and commentary on the still puzzling 8th-century *Parastaseis Syntomai Chronikai*, which also took shape in a seminar at King's College.²³ I have also often been involved in editing collective works. Editing is hard work, but it has taught me a great deal about the bigger questions and about how different kinds of scholarship can complement each other, and indeed are necessary. One of the most important of these collective endeavours was the series of workshops starting in the late 1980s in which I tried with colleagues working on the early Islamic world to bring scholars of late antiquity together with scholars of early Islam, an idea that arose out of a conference at Madison (Wisconsin), for which one of the organizers was an Islamic historian.²⁴ My colleagues and I were motivated by what seemed a lack of dialogue at the time between late antique scholars and Islamic historians and archaeologists, a situation that may indeed seem surprising at present, when Islam is firmly claimed by late antique historians as part of their territory, but one that has led to a highly fertile field of scholarship.²⁵ By the 1970s and 1980s ancient historians had also discovered Christian texts (they played no part in the Oxford syllabus of my day), and I was myself very much involved in the move towards the burgeoning field of late antiquity. But I was already active in the Byzantine sphere, and in 1983, building on his regular symposia in Birmingham, Anthony Bryer and I set up the Society for the Promotion of Byzantine Studies as secretary and chair respectively, and later I became editor of its publications. I was already involved in the British National Committee

22 Averil Cameron and S.G. Hall, *Eusebius, Life of Constantine*, Clarendon Ancient History Series (Oxford, 1999), introduction, translation and commentary.

23 Averil Cameron and Judith Herrin, in conjunction with Alan Cameron, Robin Cormack and Charlotte Roueché, *Constantinople in the Early Eighth Century: the Parastaseis Syntomoi Chronikai* (Leiden, 1984), introduction, translation, and commentary.

24 The Madison conference was published as Frank M. Clover and R. Stephen Humphreys, eds., *Tradition and Innovation in Late Antiquity* (Madison, WI, 1989). For the series see Averil Cameron and Lawrence I. Conrad, eds., *Studies in Late Antiquity and Early Islam* (Princeton, 1992-, now edited by Lawrence I. Conrad and Jens Scheiner).

25 So recently Garth Fowden, *Before and After Muhammad. The First Millenium Refocused* (Princeton, 2013).

of Byzantinists that liaised with other national committees about the international Byzantine congresses. I well remember such a meeting held at Ouranopolis in northern Greece, the starting point for visitors to Mount Athos (which of course I was not able to visit), and the sight of two female Byzantinists from the then Soviet Russia and communist Czechoslovakia taking a dip in the sea in their bathing costumes.²⁶ Byzantinist colleagues in the Soviet bloc were required to conform to the official line, and this necessitated varying degrees of surveillance by academics who were also party members. But the experience of participating in these international discussions also brought home the variety among other national traditions in Byzantine scholarship that is still so much a feature of the field.

I began to teach courses on Byzantine studies only after 1989 after an internal reorganization at King's College. Even then there was still a feeling in some quarters that the 6th century was not properly Byzantine. Moreover I was closely identified with the "explosion" of late antiquity associated with Peter Brown. Accordingly, my designation was now in both late antique and Byzantine studies, thus avoiding the issues of periodization that remain main topics in late antique scholarship today. As I have argued elsewhere, the huge growth of late antiquity as a field in recent decades represents something of a threat to Byzantium.²⁷ Indeed, some leading Byzantine historians argue that Byzantium proper only began in the 7th century with the impact of the Arab conquests. The 6th century has also become more problematic in the light of the stress currently laid on the fall of the Roman Empire in the West in the 5th century. As Eastern emperor, Justinian has always presented problems for historians – Edward Gibbon could not decide whether he was the last great Roman emperor or the first of the weak succession of "Greeks" who ruled in the East over the next seven centuries.²⁸ He is often currently portrayed as an autocrat whose scheme of reconquest not only failed but was even the cause of decline. But I started my new Byzantine courses in London with the foundation of Constantinople in 330, and that gave a different angle on late antiquity.

I was also already interested enough in the problems of how Byzantium is approached to give my inaugural lecture on this theme in 1990.²⁹ I am not an art historian, the route by which many people come to Byzantium, but I was

26 They were in fact Zinaida Udalcova and Ruzena Dostálova.

27 Averil Cameron, "Late Antiquity and Byzantium – an Identity Problem," *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 40.1 (2016), 27–37.

28 Averil Cameron, "Gibbon and Justinian," in *Edward Gibbon and Empire*, Rosamond McKitterick and Roland Quinault, eds. (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 34–52, and on the 6th century, see Pauline Allen and Elizabeth M. Jeffreys, eds., *The Sixth Century: End or Beginning?* (Brisbane, 1996).

29 Cameron, "Use and Abuse."

very conscious of the important role played by visual art in the characterization of Byzantium and our responses to it. But the tendency among some Byzantine art historians to keep “text historians” at arm’s length, and to emphasize a contrast between art and text, is in conflict with the kind of total history that I believe is needed.

So this is the background from which I came to Byzantium, a little late, and only gradually, as a result of a mixture of personal influences and a constant fascination with historiography and the bigger questions. I have always wanted to push out to new topics and areas – a tendency that is not necessarily always a good thing, but one that illustrates again how closely scholarship relates to the personal subjectivity and curiosity of the scholar. At least, that may be the case if one is lucky enough, as I was, to be less pressured than young scholars are today by academic directives, testing, and university and department policies.

2 Future Directions

It is not surprising, then, if Byzantinists feel the need to make Byzantium interesting and sympathetic, that they choose themes that will appeal.³⁰ Handbooks and collective volumes can help to make a hitherto inaccessible subject more approachable, aided by the greater availability of translations, as already mentioned.³¹ Again, Byzantine archaeology is now a major field with a wide appeal. But traditional scholarship is still much in demand, and there is a crying need for editions and studies of Byzantine texts; this was forcibly borne in on me again while working on the neglected field of prose dialogues in Byzantium.³² The close analysis of texts may need a very specialist training, but it is if anything even more necessary than before.³³

30 A very good example is provided by Judith Herrin's *Byzantium. The Surprising Life of a Medieval Empire* (London, 2007).

31 For instance Elizabeth Jeffreys, with John Haldon and Robin Cormack, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Studies* (Oxford, 2008); Paul Stephenson, ed., *The Byzantine World* (London, 2010); Liz James, ed., *A Companion to Byzantium* (Chichester, 2010).

32 Averil Cameron, *Arguing it Out. Discussion in Twelfth-Century Byzantium*, The Natalie Zemon Davis Lectures 2014 (Budapest, 2016); Averil Cameron and Niels Gaul, eds., *Dialogues and Debates from Late Antiquity to Late Byzantium* (Milton Park, 2017) contains several chapters on Byzantine texts hitherto hardly studied.

33 Though the number of published volumes in the current series *Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae* (CFHB) has now reached 53 and Byzantine Greek texts are increasingly available online.

We ought also to be asking how Byzantium can be integrated into general history rather than remaining a minor and rather exotic niche subject. Taking a cue from a recent paper about another subject that the author considers small and still fragile, Byzantinists cannot exist alone in their own bubble: if Byzantium is to feature seriously in mainstream history its practitioners need to “find academic allies” (meaning natural linkages), and also to “insert” Byzantium into current and ongoing historical debates.³⁴

When I was writing *Byzantine Matters* I identified five problem areas for Byzantium: absence from most wider historical narratives, the question of empire, what Byzantium means and has meant in relation to ideas of Hellenism, issues around visual art, and how it needs to be explained to broader audiences, and finally Orthodoxy – was Byzantium really so totally dominated by Orthodoxy? Most of these, though, are internal questions. I want to turn now to the question of how Byzantium can find a more central place in general history.

A particular problem is still that of the East-West divide. To which does Byzantium belong, East or West? I have already suggested that it has had a difficult relation with historians of Europe. For Gibbon it represented weakness, “Greekness” and decline, contrasted with the strength and power of Rome. Its reception in art, literature and theatre since the 19th century identified it with exoticism, Oriental display and complexity, in what was in fact a form of Orientalism.³⁵ And yet Byzantium saw itself as Rome, and grew out of the Roman Empire; as Kaldellis continues to insist, its Roman identity continued throughout the Byzantine period. Although Kaldellis emphasizes the Roman Republic as a political model for Byzantium,³⁶ Rome was already becoming the international empire that it remained, and a glance at a map of Byzantium in any period will show that it too belonged both in Europe and further east. It is impossible to consider the history of the Mediterranean, or the interactions of the Islamic world and the West, without Byzantium. The desire to avoid Eurocentrism – writing history from the viewpoint of Western Europe – is one of the strongest themes in current historiography, and again, including Byzantium is essential, but it must not be as the old stereotype of Byzantium. It will only be possible to give Byzantium the role it should be playing in these

34 See Jurgen Osterhummel, “Global History and Historical Sociology,” in *The Prospect of Global History*, James Belich et al., eds. (Oxford, 2016), pp. 23–43, at p. 24; Osterhummel refers here to what he considers the still small and fragile subject of global history, but see below.

35 See Averil Cameron, “Byzance dans le débat sur l’Orientalisme,” in *Byzance et l’Europe*, M.-F. Auzépy, ed., pp. 227–42.

36 Anthony Kaldellis, *The Byzantine Republic. People and Power in New Rome* (Cambridge, MA, 2015).

discussions by presenting it as it actually was, and not how it has seemed to generations of Western European historians.

The next theme into which Byzantium can be “inserted” is that of empire.³⁷ There is currently a very lively interest in empires, and in comparing empires, and Rome is naturally prominent. The Roman Empire has been compared with the “American empire,” and with Han China, and contemporary issues clearly have a part to play.³⁸ Bureaucracy, centralization, coercion and territoriality are key concepts in this debate; however Byzantium has had much less attention up to now, despite several important contributions by John Haldon. Of course we can question whether Byzantium was in fact an empire. In some publications Haldon has argued that its territory was small, and has preferred to call it a state rather than an empire, with its beginning only in the 7th century, or a “successor-state” in relation to the Roman empire, or even a “rump” state.³⁹ Anthony Kaldellis has gone much further and claims that it was a republic.⁴⁰ He argues however from a narrow focus on political vocabulary and from incidents involving the people of Constantinople, whoever they may be, not from structures, or regions, or indeed the features usually seen as marks of an empire. It seems to be agreed that definitions of empire cannot cover every example – empires can even exist without being territorial. But Byzantium surely qualifies in any case. We can argue about when it began and when it drastically changed; some histories of Byzantium end their coverage in 1204 with the capture of Constantinople by the Fourth Crusade,⁴¹ and indeed, after that there were plural centres, and this continued after the Byzantines from Nicaea got back to Constantinople in 1261. A longer view is nevertheless appropriate. Byzantium maintained a central governing structure for centuries, kept an administration going and was able to adapt during the difficult period after the Arab conquests, fielded armies, absorbed other peoples and at times

37 Cameron, *Byzantine Matters*, chap. 2; Averil Cameron, “The Empire of Byzantium,” in *The Medieval World*, rev ed., Peter Linehan, Janet L. Nelson and Marios Costambeys, eds. (Milton Park, 2017), pp. 106–25, with earlier references.

38 For discussion see Phiroze Vasunia, “The Comparative Study of Empires,” *Journal of Roman Studies* 101 (2011), 222–37.

39 John F. Haldon, “The Byzantine Successor-State,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the State*, Peter F. Bang and Walter Scheidel, eds. (Oxford, 2013), pp. 475–97; Peter Sarris, *Empires of Faith: The Fall of Rome to the Rise of Islam, 500–700* (Oxford, 2011).

40 Kaldellis, *The Byzantine Republic*.

41 So also Kaldellis, *The Byzantine Republic*, and cf. Edward Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy of the Byzantine Empire* (Cambridge, MA, 2009). For this periodization and related problems see Olof Heilo, “When did Constantinople Actually Fall?,” in *Wanted, Byzantium*, Nilsson and Stephenson, eds., pp. 77–92.

conducted offensive warfare; in addition it had a strong ideology and a legal framework. All these are constituent features of empires.

Does it matter whether or not Byzantium was an empire, and what kind of state it was? I think it does, because if we want it to be better recognized, and taken more seriously, need to know what sort of state and society we are dealing with. And if we wish to compare it with other political systems and other empires we need to know whether or not we are comparing like with like.

The theme of empire leads us into a further current debate, concerning global history. Global history (not the same as “world history”) is a development from the study of empires (I am struck by how many historians now involving themselves in global history were once historians of empire) and from comparative history. In the broader global history sphere, indeed, empires tend to be replaced by the language of hegemony and hegemons (we should therefore be asking whether Byzantium was hegemonial, and if so in what ways). Global history works by looking at connections (connectivity, travel, migration, foreign groups, ideas, objects), by comparison (though not necessarily by comparing states), and by asking questions about long-term or contemporary developments in different societies. It tends to prefer an emphasis on the plural and local, but political and religious structures must be part of it too. Again, the Roman Empire features in works on global history (everyone has heard of it and knows something about it), but so far it has been hard to find Byzantium. I think this may be changing.⁴² Considering how Byzantium can be accommodated in this debate would also be a good way of encouraging Byzantinists to ask different questions about their subject, and to look across at other societies and find ways of illuminating it. In a discussion of global history held in Oxford recently Chris Wickham said that he thought it could only really be done collaboratively – scholars with different backgrounds working together. This yet again challenges Byzantinists to move beyond their ghetto and look at questions that affect other societies as well.

Finally, what is in a name? Anthony Kaldellis would like us not to call Byzantium Byzantium – after all, it was not a name used at the time, but was coined

42 Byzantium does not feature as such in Belich et al., eds., *The Prospect of Global History*, or in Sebastian Conrad's recent discussion, *What is Global History?* (Princeton, 2016), but it is included in its scope by the Oxford Centre for Global History and features in “Defining the Global Middle Ages,” a network led by Catherine Holmes, Naomi Standen and Scott Ashley, and see also R.I. Moore, “A Global Middle Ages?,” in *The Prospect of Global History*, Belich et al., eds., pp. 80–92. In view of its connection with the modern concept of globalization, the global history approach has tended to focus on the modern period, but is increasingly also being applied to pre-modern subjects.

in the early modern period, and was not meant as a compliment. The Byzantines called themselves Romans, or sometimes Hellenes (though only towards the end of the period). But we need a way of distinguishing them from the Holy Roman Empire in the East, and making it clear that the capital was not Rome but Constantinople. We could call them “East Romans,” and some recent historians do. But Byzantium does have the merit of usage and familiarity, and I am myself not sure that the advantages of a change outweigh the disadvantages. It is also true that deciding when the Roman empire in the East, or late antiquity, ended and when Byzantium began are not easy matters; opinions differ. But refusing to use the term Byzantium only adds to a confusion that does not help when Byzantinists are in conversation with other historians, and certainly not when they are aiming at the general public.

Inserting Byzantium into this wider context leads to even bigger questions? Byzantium certainly belongs in histories of the Mediterranean world. Does it also belong to Eurasia? Or to “western Eurasia,” or indeed to “Afro-eurasia”? The latter term is said to include besides Europe, the Middle East and North Africa,⁴³ but stands in contrast with an alternative Eurasian perspective that puts Byzantium at the western edge of a swathe of territory reaching through the Caucasus and the steppe and as far east as China.⁴⁴ Talking about Byzantium in such terms has the merit of deconstructing old-style history and avoiding Eurocentrism, but the risk is that it may do so at the cost of obscuring its particularity and its actual importance.

In the end, we all have to choose where we focus our attention and how. For many Byzantinists their specialism will not fit the approaches I have advocated. But it is my firm belief that Byzantium needs to take its place on the centre stage instead of in the margins. This is a task to which every Byzantinist, if in different ways, can and should contribute.

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43 James Belich et al., “Introduction,” in *The Prospect of Global History*, Belich et al., eds., p. 4.

44 As in Michael Maas and Nicola di Cosmo, eds., *Empires and Exchanges in Eurasian Late Antiquity: Rome, China, Iran and the Steppes* (Cambridge, 2017).

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